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SUBJECT: SEPTEMBER 25 MFA PRESS BRIEFING: CHAVEZ VISIT, MILK SCANDAL, NORTH KOREA NUCLEAR ISSUE, HU JIA, SHENZHOU 7

¶1. Key points at the September 25 afternoon MFA press briefing were:

-- China did not discuss military cooperation with President Chavez during his recent visit, despite claims by Chavez that such cooperation was discussed. The two sides signed energy and trade agreements during the visit.

-- The spokesperson acknowledged that there are "difficulties" to overcome in the Six-Party process in light of the DPRK's recent moves to restart its nuclear program.

-- The spokesperson said he was not familiar with reports that activist Hu Jia could be under consideration for the Nobel Peace Prize, but expressed his hope that the Nobel committee would make the "right" choice.

-- China wants to work with food safety authorities of countries that have concerns about the safety of Chinese food products.

-- The purpose of China's space program is exploration and development of the peaceful use of outer space.

Chavez Visit

¶2. At the September 25 regular MFA press briefing, spokesperson Liu Jianchao said Chinese officials exchanged views on political, economic and cultural issues with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez during his September 23-25 trip to Beijing. Asked if the two sides discussed military trade and cooperation, Liu said he "had not heard that they had." Asked to clarify the statement by President Chavez that he had discussed "military cooperation" during the visit, Liu said flatly that the two sides did not discuss military cooperation.

Liu said that China and Venezuela signed twelve agreements on trade, energy cooperation, and other topics, but declined to offer details of the agreements. He said that the agreements will promote mutually beneficial cooperation between the two sides and he expressed hope that the "steady" development of China-Venezuela relations would continue. On the possibility that Russian warships could travel to Venezuela for military exercises, Liu said that it was an issue between Russia and Venezuela, and China had no comment.

DPRK Resumption of Nuclear Program

¶3. Asked if China has a position on the resumption of the North Korean nuclear program, Liu said that there had been "important progress" on the nuclear issue and there is now an "opportunity" for additional progress. He acknowledged that there are "difficulties" to overcome, and urged flexibility from relevant parties to complete Phase II. When pressed on whether the situation had reached the point that energy assistance to the DPRK should be postponed, Liu said he had not heard of any delay of assistance. He added that

China hopes that issues such as verification can be solved to allow for further progress.

Hu Jia/Nobel Peace Prize

¶ 14. Asked if China had a comment on reports that activist Hu Jia was under consideration for the Nobel Peace Prize, Liu said he was not familiar with the reports, but stressed that the Nobel Prize should be awarded to the "right" individuals, and expressed his hope that the Nobel committee would make the "right" choice.

Tainted Milk/Food Safety

¶ 15. Liu said that China is handling the situation of melamine-tainted dairy products "carefully." Asked if the government would take over the Sanlu Company, Liu said that questions on "specific measures" should be referred to the competent authorities. Asked whether China is considering a national recall of some food products due to possible melamine contamination, as some countries that import Chinese food products are ordering, Liu said that China wants to work with food safety authorities of countries that have concerns about the safety of Chinese food products in a "realistic" way. He said China continues to take a responsible attitude toward food safety. Asked for comment on reports that high-level government officials enjoy food sourced from special, organic farms to ensure its safety, Liu said only that he "doubts this information."

¶ 16. Asked by a Japanese journalist for an update on the investigation into tainted dumplings that were exported to Japan, Liu said there was no new information on the case.

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Shenzhou 7

¶ 17. Asked about the upcoming launch of the Shenzhou 7 space mission, Liu said China seeks the peaceful use of outer space, and that the ultimate purpose of China's space program is exploration and the development of space technology for peaceful purposes.

RANDT